

Last week, House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dave Camp and I sent a [letter](#) to Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Kathleen Sebelius requesting information on a quality bonus program for Medicare Advantage plans. President Obama's 2010 health care law slashed payments to Medicare Advantage, which will ultimately result in millions of seniors [losing access](#) to their choice of plans. However, the effect of these cuts has been muted because of the bonus program, which is supposed to reward "high-quality" plans but will actually provide additional payments for 90 percent of the market. The nonpartisan Government Accountability Office (GAO) has [concluded](#) that this program is poorly designed and exceeds HHS's legal authority, and has urged its termination.

The serious flaws in the "quality bonus" program raise a fundamental question: Is HHS truly motivated by a desire to improve the quality of seniors' health care? Or is the real purpose of this program to hide the impact of the health law's Medicare Advantage cuts until after the November elections? Unfortunately, these cuts will continue to grow over time, meaning that seniors will still face a reduced choice of Medicare plans in future years if President Obama's health care law stays in effect. In light of these concerns, Chairman Camp and I are asking HHS to release all communications with other federal agencies and campaign committees related to the development of the quality bonus program. I believe that the senior citizens who participate in Medicare, and the taxpayers whose money is going toward these bonuses, deserve to know whether this is a health care program or a political one.